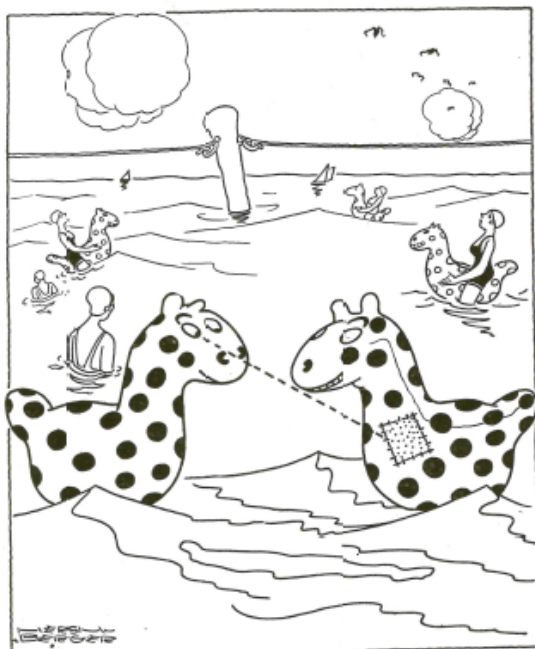


University of Wisconsin-Madison
History of Twentieth-Century American Medicine
Spring 2025



R. A. Hershberger

"I must tell you about my operation!"

Course Number: 218 HistSci

Credit Hours: 3

Course Designation and Attributes:

Level: Elementary

Breadth Social Studies

L&S Credit type: Counts as LAS Credit (L&S)

Instruction Mode: Classroom Instruction

Room: 2335 Sterling Hall

Lecture time: TuTh 2:30-3:45 pm

Instructor:

Susan E. Lederer, Ph.D.

Ronald L. Numbers Professor of History of Medicine and Bioethics

Email: selederer@wisc.edu

Office: MSC 1420. (Medical Science Center 1420, 1300 University Avenue).

Office Hours: In person- Wednesday, 1-2 p.m. or by appointment.

Description:

This course examines the changing role of medicine and health care in American society over the long 20th century. Beginning with the 19th developments in the biomedical sciences and the social organization of physicians and nurses, we will examine how the experience of illness and healthcare was transformed, reflecting social, economic, cultural, and political developments in 20th century America. Students will use an array of materials coming from primary and secondary, historical sources, and films and other media that influenced American expectations and assumptions about patients, nurses, and physicians. Topics include the changing role of the hospital in the delivery of health care, such life-changing medical innovations as insulin, antibiotics, blood transfusion, and organ transplantation, the changing fortunes of alternative medicine, medicalization and de-medicalization, medical research, physician-assisted suicide, and the history and current debates over health insurance and the role of the government in providing healthcare.

Learning Outcomes:

Students will be able to

- Identify the social, cultural, and political factors that have shaped the health care system and health institutions in 20th century America.
- Analyze the changing interactions of patients, physicians, nurses, and other health care personnel over the last century.
- Describe how the experience of illness was transformed in the 20th century, and the changing role of technologies, pharmaceuticals, and medical research.
- Understand the ways in which assumptions about race, gender, and socio-economic factors affect the experience of illness and health outcomes over the long twentieth century.

COURSE POLICIES AND REQUIREMENTS

Credit Hours and Student Workload:

This three-credit class meets for two, 75-minute class periods each week over the spring semester. It carries the expectation that students will work on course learning activities (reading, writing, film viewing, studying) for about three hours for every class period.

Grading:

In-class Midterm exam	20%
Essay on Primary Source	20%
Health Matters Essay	40%
Participation	20%

Grades on assignments and exams are recorded as numerical scores out of a total of 100 points (these scores are later weighted to arrive at a final composite course grade). The table for converting your final composite (weighted) numerical grade into final letter grades is as follows:

93 and above	A
87 to 92.9	AB
81-86.9	B
75-80.9	BC
69-74.9	C
60-68.9	D
<60	F

In addition,

- students must submit all assignments and complete all assignments in order to pass this course.
- Students may not elect to opt out of an assignment and receive an F on it.
- Any non-emergency extensions must be requested prior to the due date.
- Although you are encouraged to discuss your papers with friends and classmates, no group work is allowed.

Midterm Examination February 20 in-class.

There will be an in-class midterm exam on February 20. The exam will include multiple choice questions, and two short essays that address key themes or events drawn from the first half of the semester. A midterm review session will be held in advance and a key term list will be provided.

Essays

Essay on Primary Source

Due March 20 by 4 PM CT. Electronic submission through CANVAS.

Students will select primary sources from a curated folder (i.e. medical advertisements, popular media, film) and write a 3–4-page essay that analyzes the ways in which it shapes/reflects patient expectations and behavior.

Health Matters Essay:

Due April 24 20 by 4 PM CT. Electronic submission through CANVAS.

This essay involves reading a primary source from 1954, when the National Opinion Research Center (NORC) conducted over 2500 interviews with Americans across the nation. Interviewers asked about the individual's illness experiences, their knowledge of medical developments, and their experience of health care. The interview also included open ended questions about what health and health care meant to these midcentury Americans. In this assignment you will be emailed an interview (18-20 pages) and asked to evaluate and analyze the individual's responses in the context of our readings and discussions over the semester.

Your paper for this assignment must include the following elements:

- a. a brief description of the individual, their demographic characteristics and geographic location. You should also address how and where the individual gained information about health
- b. an analysis of their experience with physicians, pharmacists, and health care costs
- c. discussion of how their responses reflected their past experiences and how the 1950s influenced their understanding of health and disease
- d. what made this individual's experience different or unique?

Your paper should be 6-8 pages. It is due April 24.

Participation

Discussions are essential to analyzing the historical, substantive, and cultural complexity of race, medicine and public health. There will be new material presented in class, as well as the opportunity to engage with images and texts—both primary and secondary. This approach requires that you do the reading before class, that you attend class with the goal of raising questions, offering comments, or responding to the readings and the issues they raise.

The operating assumption is that we will all benefit from the expression of thoughtful perspectives, ideas, and informed opinions of all students. I encourage students to adopt the following norms for discussion:

- Presume positive intentions from your colleagues
- Engage respectfully
- Provide evidence and comments from the texts we are reading when possible.

The participation grade will be determined based on attendance and the student's active and meaningful participation during class discussions. I will provide a mid-term assessment to all students about their participation. You are also welcome, at any time, to discuss this requirement (and any others) with the professor to learn more. I will make every effort to start class on time and to end on time.

In addition, I will ask each of you to send me two discussion points for TWO of the readings in class. These discussion points may be questions you had about the article, a comment or criticism about the paper, or just something you think deserved class discussion. There will be a sign-up sheet in which you are asked to choose the articles – once it is finalized, I will post the list on the CANVAS website. Your questions/comments are due by midnight prior to the class in which they are scheduled for discussion.

IMPORTANT DATES Spring 2025

February 20	In-class midterm examination.
March 20	Essay on Primary Source due on CANVAS.
March 22-30	Spring Break
April 22	Health Matters Paper due on CANVAS.
May 1	Last Day of Class

Regarding Absences/Illness/Religious Observances

As the course instructor, I consider your health and safety to be a top priority. Please do not come to class if you are not feeling well. I will work with you to provide reasonable accommodations in the event of an emergency, personal illness, or loss of a loved one.

As a student, you have the right to personal privacy regarding your health. If you will miss class due a religious observance, please let me know and we will find an alternate date/time for you to make-up a scheduled exam.

Email Policy:

I welcome email communications. But please do not expect immediate responses. I will do my best to return any email messages within 24 hours on weekdays and by Monday for emails sent on Friday afternoon or over the weekend. All students need to ensure that the email address listed for them is accurate and current. Do check the website for basic course information and copies of handouts before emailing me with routine questions.

Privacy of Student Records and Usage of Audio Recorded Lectures.

Please note that lecture materials and recordings for this class are protected intellectual property at UW- Madison. Students in this course may use the materials and recordings for their personal use related to participation in this class. Students may also take notes solely for their personal use. If a lecture is not already recorded, you are not authorized to record my lectures without my permission unless you are considered by the university to be a qualified student with a disability requiring accommodation. [Regent Policy Document 4- 1] Students may not copy or have lecture materials and recordings outside of class, including posting on internet sites or selling to commercial entities. Students are also prohibited from providing or selling their personal notes to anyone else or being paid for taking notes by any person or commercial firm without the instructor's express written permission. Unauthorized use of these copyrighted lecture materials and recordings constitutes copyright infringement and may be addressed under the university's policies, UWS Chapters 14 and 17, governing student academic and non-academic misconduct. For more information, see [Privacy of Student Records & Use of Audio Recorded Lectures](#).

Electronic Etiquette Policy

Students are allowed to use laptops for note-taking. Other uses of laptops, tablets, e-readers, or phones (except during emergencies) during class meetings are not permitted unless specifically instructed to do so during in- class activities or for learning accommodations. Surfing the internet and/or text messaging during class will be considered distractions to the instructor and fellow students and will adversely affect the participation grade.

No audio or video recording of any presentation or class activity is permitted without the instructor prior written approval.

Class Policies Regarding Written Work and Plagiarism

In addition to the University's policies governing Academic Honesty and Misconduct (**see below**), this course requires you to observe a set of specific class policies regarding your written work. This means that grade penalties can be imposed for failing to comply with these policies, even if the matter is not reported to the Dean as an official case of academic dishonesty or misconduct. In that regard, these specific class policies regarding written work function like this course's attendance policy: If you fail to comply with the policy, your grade can and will be lowered by the instructor.

The class policies regarding written work that you must follow are contained in the document from the University's Writing Center linked to at the end of this section. The purpose of these policies is to ensure that students receive credit solely where credit is due to them. Any words, phrases, or ideas that are borrowed from another source, any other source, must be properly

acknowledged and cited, even if paraphrased. Specific class assignments may contain additional rules and guidelines for citation, but at the very least the rules and guidelines to avoid plagiarism as set out in the Writing Center's website here: <https://writing.wisc.edu/handbook/documentation/>

Policy on the use of Artificial Intelligence (Chat GPT)

To put it simply, you may not use AI-generated responses (such as those by Chat GPT, Bard, or other bots) and present it as your own work. I also strongly discourage you to use AI to look for historical information related to this course (Like many professors, I have run questions for essays and quizzes on available platforms. The bots' answers, not surprisingly, are not always accurate, and when a bot does not know something, it will make up information.). For this reason, I will consider using ChatGPT or other AI programs to assist you in drafting your work and essays (including online assignments of any length) to be academic misconduct in this class.

Stated Course Policies are non-exhaustive.

The course policies stated in this syllabus are not necessarily exhaustive. I reserve the right to impose additional or amended policies as circumstances warrant. Any change will be announced both in class and on the course CANVAS website.

Academic Honesty and Misconduct

Students who submit papers not in compliance with the UW rules governing academic honesty and plagiarism (which you can find here <https://conduct.students.wisc.edu/academic-misconduct/> and here https://docs.legis.wisconsin.gov/code/admin_code/uws/14.pdf) will receive an F. Ignorance of what counts as academic misconduct or plagiarism is not an acceptable defense. All cases of Academic Dishonesty and Misconduct are reported to the Dean of Students.

Accommodations for Students with Disabilities:

This course abides by the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA). The ADA is a federal antidiscrimination statute that provides comprehensive civil rights protection for persons with disabilities. Among other things, this legislation requires that all students with disabilities be guaranteed a learning environment that provides for reasonable accommodation of their disabilities. If you have a documented disability and wish to discuss academic accommodations, please contact me as soon as possible so that I can make every reasonable effort to provide adequate accommodation.

Diversity and Inclusion

Diversity is a source of strength, creativity, and innovation for UW-Madison. We value the contributions of each person and respect the profound ways their identity, culture, background, experience, status, abilities, and opinion enrich the university community. We commit ourselves to the pursuit of excellence in teaching, research, outreach, and diversity as inextricably linked goals.

The University of Wisconsin-Madison fulfills its public mission by creating a welcoming and inclusive community for people from every background – people who as students, faculty, and staff serve Wisconsin and the world.

<https://diversity.wisc.edu>.

Required Texts: All readings will be available on the course CANVAS website.

CLASS TOPICS

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| 1. Jan 21 | Introductions and Expectations |
| 2. Jan 23 | Before the Great War |
| 3. Jan 28 | Immigrant Health Menaces |
| 4. Jan 30 | Pandemic! Spanish Influenza in 1918-1919 |
| 5. Feb 4 | Eugenic America |
| 6. Feb 6 | Making the Modern Hospital |
| 7. Feb 11 | Medically Modernizing Maternity |
| 8. Feb 13 | Speaking of Operations |
| 9. Feb 18 | Paying for Health Care Before World War II |
| 10. Feb 20 | Midterm (In class) |
| 11. Feb 25 | World War II: Blood transfusion and Magic Bullets |
| 12. Feb 27 | World War II: Atomic Medicine |
| 13. March 4 | Medical Research |
| 14. March 6 | Polio in America |
| 15. March 11 | American Guinea Pigs: Tuskegee and Guatemala STD |
| 16. March 13 | America's Longest War (fluoride/iodine) |
| 17. March 18 | Alternatives to Orthodoxy |
| 18. March 20 | Medicine and Madison Avenue (Essay I Due) |

MARCH 22-MARCH 30 Spring Break

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| 19. April 1 | Health Matters (Guest Lecture Dr. Kari McLeod) |
| 20. April 3 | Women's Reproductive Health |
| 21. April 8 | Physicians, Death, and Dying |

22. April 10	How to Survive HIV/ AIDS
23. April 15	Spare Part Surgery
24. April 17	The Goals of Medicine (Enhancement)
25. April 22	The Great Society: Medicare and Medicaid
26. April 24	Obama Care/ Affordable Care Act
27. April 29	Medical Tourism/Go Fund Me
28. May 1	Back to the Future?

Course Reading Assignments

Jan 21 Introductions and Expectations

Jan 23 Before the Great War

Readings:

Grover Cleveland, "The Plea of the Patient," *Albany Medical Annals* 1906:

J. V. Stevens, "Getting Down to Cases," *Wisconsin Magazine of History* (1937): 390-403.

Jan 28 Immigrant "Health Menaces"

Readings:

C. P. Knight, "Detection of the Mentally Defective Among Immigrants," *JAMA* (1913): 106-07.

Anne-Emanuelle Birn, "Six Seconds Per Eyelid: The Medical Inspection of Immigrants at Ellis Island, 1892-1914." *Dynamis* (1997): 81-316.

Jan 30 Pandemic! Spanish Influenza in 1918-1919

Readings:

Nancy Tomes, "'Destroyer and teacher': Managing the masses during the 1918-1919 influenza pandemic." *Public Health Reports* 125, no. 3_suppl (2010): 48-62.

Steven Burg, "Wisconsin and the Great Spanish Flu Epidemic of 1918 ," *Wisconsin Magazine of History*, (2000): 36-56.

Feb 4 Eugenic America

Readings:

Charles B. Davenport, "The effects of race intermingling," *Proceedings of the American Philosophical Society* 56 (1917): 364-368.

Bernard E. Roloff, "The Eugenic Marriage Laws of Wisconsin, Michigan, and Indiana," *Journal of Social Hygiene* 1920: 227-238.

Film: *Tomorrow's Children* (available at Internet Archive: <https://archive.org/details/TomorrowsChildren1934-AmericanForcedSterilization-PublicDomain>)

Feb 6 The Modern Hospital

Readings:

S. A. Tannenbaum, M.D. and Paul M. Branden, "There's No Place Like a Hospital," *The Patient's Dilemma: A Public Trial of the Medical Profession* (1935):92-116.

Joel D. Howell, "Machines and Medicine: Technology Transforms the American Hospital," in *The American General Hospital: Communities and Social Context* (1989): 109-134.

Feb 11 Medically Modernizing Maternity

Readings:

S. A. Tannenbaum, M.D. and Paul M. Branden, "The Baby Business," *The Patient's Dilemma: A Public Trial of the Medical Profession* (1935): 139-62.

Walter White, "The Death of a Citizen," in his *A Man Called White* (1948), 134-138.

Feb 13 Becoming a Surgical Patient

Readings:

Irvin S. Cobb, "Speaking of Operations," *Saturday Evening Post*, November 1915.

Feb 18 Paying for Health Care Before World War II

Readings:

B. Hoffmann, "Patchwork Protection: The Specter of Sickness and Poverty," in her *Wages of Sickness: The Politics of Health Insurance in Progressive America* (2001):

Feb 20 Midterm (In class)

Feb 25 World War II: Blood Transfusion and Magic Bullets

Readings:

Charles V. Nemo, "I sell blood," *American Mercury*, 1934: 194-203.

Noah Fabricant and L. Zimmerman, "The Cry for Blood," *Hygeia* (1939): 881-84, 936-37.

Jean CY Wang, "A call to arms: wartime blood donor recruitment," *Transfusion medicine reviews* (2018): 52-57.

Albert Q. Maisel, "Medical Miracles on the Battlefields," *The American Mercury*, June 1943: 713-720.

Feb 27 World War II: Atomic Medicine**Readings:**

C. P. Rhoads, "The medical uses of atomic energy," *Bulletin of the Atomic Scientists* 2, no. 7-8 (1946): 22-24.

Susan E. Lederer, "Going for the Burn:: Medical Preparedness in Early Cold War America," *The Journal of Law, Medicine & Ethics* (2011): 48-53.

March 4 Medical Research

TBA

March 6 Polio in America**Readings:**

Rogers, Naomi. "Resistance to Polio Vaccines in Mid-twentieth-century America: The Role of the March of Dimes, Community Skepticism, Racial Inequalities, and Medical Politics." *Nursing History Review* (2023): 80-92.

Film: View *The Polio Crusade* (American Experience, PHS) 53 minutes.

Available on Youtube: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=kk2IDigWBN8>

March 11 American Guinea Pigs: Tuskegee and Guatemala STD Studies**Readings:**

Eunice Rivers, S. H. Schuman, L Simpson, Sidney Olansky, "Twenty years of followup experience in a long-range medical study," *Public Health Reports* (1953). 391-??

Susan Lederer, "The Tuskegee Syphilis Study in the Context of American Medical Research," in *Tuskegee's Truths: The Tuskegee Syphilis Study*, 2012: 266-275.

Thomas Frieden and Francis Collins, "Intentional Infection of Vulnerable Populations in 1946-1948: Another Tragic History Lesson," *JAMA* (2010): 2063-64.

"The Tuskegee Syphilis Study," *PrimeTime Live* (1992).

March 13 Fighting over Fluoride

Readings:

Donald R. McNeil, "America's Longest War: The Fight over Fluoridation, 1950," *The Wilson Quarterly* 9, no. 3 (1985): 140-153.

Christine Till and Rivka Green, "Controversy: The evolving science of fluoride: When new evidence doesn't conform with existing beliefs," *Pediatric research* (2021): 1093-1095.

Howard Markel, "'When it rains it pours': endemic goiter, iodized salt, and David Murray Cowie, MD," *American Journal of Public Health* 77 (1987): 219-229.

March 18 Alternatives to Orthodoxy

Readings:

Annie Riley Hale, "The Voodoo and the Cancer Riddle," in her *The Medical Voodoo* (New York, 1935), chapter ix.

Louis S. Reed, *The Healing Cults* (Chicago, 1932), chapters 1 (p1-4) and 7.

James C. Whorton, "From Cultism to CAM: Alternative Medicine in the Twentieth Century," in *The Politics of Healing: Histories of Alternative Medicine in Twentieth Century North America*, 87-305.

March 20 Medicine and Madison Avenue. Essay Due

Readings:

Nancy Tomes, "The great American medicine show revisited," *Bulletin of the History of Medicine* (2005): 627-663.

March 22-30 Spring Break

April 1 Health Matters (Guest Lecture Dr. Kari McLeod)

April 3 Women's Reproductive Health

Readings:

Schoen, Johanna. "Living through some giant change: The establishment of abortion services." *American journal of public health* 103, no. 3 (2013): 416-425.

Leslie J. Reagan, "From When Abortion Was a Crime to Abortion Is a Crime." *Bulletin of the History of Medicine* 97, no. 1 (2023): 11-21.

April 8 Physicians, Death, and Dying**Readings:**

Monica Gerrek, "Getting Past Dax," *AMA Journal of Ethics* 20 (2018): 581-588.

Corey Pein, "'Everybody Freeze!': The Extropians Want Your Body," *The Baffler*, no. 30 (2016): 84-101.

Films: *Please Let Me Die* (1974); *Who Should Survive?* (1971)

April 10 How to Survive HIV/AIDS**Viewing:**

How to Survive a Plague (2012 documentary) Directed by David France, 110 minutes

The film "tells the riveting and heartbreaking story of the founding and growth of ACT UP (AIDS Coalition to Unleash Power), a central player in the struggle to pressure drug companies and the U.S. government to aggressively pursue a treatment and cure for AIDS. Through rich and intimate archival material — home videos made by the activists themselves, news broadcasts, footage of protests — viewers learn about the men and women who comprised ACT UP, many of whom were sick with the virus themselves, and see, in real time, how their bold civil disobedience was born, cultivated, honed, and mobilized at key moments in the struggle. The filmmakers do not reveal, until the end, who among the original cadre of activists lived to benefit from the discovery of an effective treatment for AIDS; this strategy both makes for incredibly powerful viewing and serves to remind us that the political fight for these activists was literally a matter of life and death."

[LINK TO THE FILM](#)

April 15 Spare Part Surgery**Readings:**

Susan E. Lederer, "Tucker's Heart: Racial Politics and Heart Transplantation in America," in *A Death Retold: Jesica Santillan and the Bungled Transplant, and Paradoxes of Medical Citizenship* (2006): 142-157.

April 17 The Goals of Medicine

Readings:

Nancy Tones, "Patients or health-care consumers? Why the history of contested terms matters." In *History and health policy in the United States* (2006): 83-110.

April 22 The Great Society: Medicare and Medicaid

Readings:

Beatrix Hoffmann, "Entitlements but Not Rights: Medicare and Medicaid," in her *Health Care for Some: Rights and Rationing in the United States Since 1930* (2012): 117-142, 248-52.

April 24 Obama Care/Affordable Care Act

Readings:

Barack Obama, "United States Health Care Reform: Progress to Date and Next Steps," *JAMA* 2016: 525-532.

April 29 21st Century Problems

Readings:

Nora Kenworthy and Mark Igra, "Medical crowdfunding and disparities in health care access in the United States, 2016–2020," *American Journal of Public Health* (2022): 491-498.

Sally Satel and Andrew J. Aronson, "Transplant tourism: treating patients when they return to the US," *AMA Journal of Ethics Virtual Mentor* 10, no. 5 (2008): 271-277.

Sally Satel, "Desperately Seeking a Kidney," *New York Times*, December 16, 2007.

May 1 Back to the Future?

Readings:

Jared J. Eddy, Hilary A. Smith, and Jeanne E. Abrams, "Historical lessons on vaccine hesitancy: smallpox, polio, and measles, and implications for COVID-19." *Perspectives in Biology and Medicine* 2023: 145-159.